

Whistleblowers are a critical component of ensuring that our government remains accountable to the people that it serves. For years, I have worked with fellow lawmakers to ensure that whistleblowers have the kind of protections they need to be able to shine a light on waste, fraud, and abuse—without fear of retribution. Part of this effort has been through rigorous congressional oversight of agency compliance with laws like the Whistleblower Protection Act.

This also involves rooting out areas for improvement. Earlier this month, the Senate Judiciary Committee held an oversight hearing to examine the urgent need for increased whistleblower protections at the FBI, where—unlike every other Federal agency—employees are not protected from retaliation for uncovering and reporting wrongdoings to their direct supervisors.

People who are courageous enough to open wide the curtains on waste, fraud, and abuse should not have to fear for their livelihood; they should be honored for exposing the truth. To help advance this effort, I—along with a bipartisan group of Senators—recently launched the Whistleblower Protection Caucus. The caucus will serve as a resource for the latest information on whistleblower developments and will foster bipartisan discussion on the treatment of whistleblowers.

Agency inspectors general, likewise, play a crucial role in bringing information about government actions—or inactions—out into the public light. It is important that their jobs not be undermined by the very agencies within which they operate. I am continually frustrated by the stories I hear of an agency stonewalling an inspector general's attempt to uncover the truth. In August 2014, 47 inspectors general from across the Federal government wrote to Congress about agency refusals to provide access to documents and information critical to their investigative efforts.

I am particularly troubled by recent reports from the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General that the FBI is failing to provide it with timely access to records. Not only is the FBI dragging its feet in turning over key documents, it is erecting barriers to access that are in direct contradiction with Federal law.

If agencies are willing to go to such lengths to prevent disclosure, we have all the more reason to recognize and support the efforts of those who—often at great risk—seek to peel back the curtains.

Sunshine Week continues to be a reflection of the tireless efforts of whistleblowers, government watchdogs, investigative journalists, and average Americans from across the country who are steadfast in their pursuit of a more transparent and accountable government. They are doing their part. We need to do ours. Let's build upon this 10th anniversary of Sunshine Week to

engage in the discussions and work together toward the solutions that will truly usher in a new era of openness.

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. DOUGLAS ELMENDORF

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I would like to take this moment to recognize Dr. Douglas Elmendorf's strong service to our country and, specifically, to the Congress. He leaves the directorship of the Congressional Budget Office today after leading this important agency for 6 years, one of the longest tenures in CBO's 40-year history. His steady, wise, and innovative management of Congress's budget umpires has enhanced that organization's already sterling reputation.

We are particularly grateful for his steady hand as we worked our way through the policy responses to the great recession. I cannot think of a more trying time to have been CBO Director than the last 6 years.

He also gets high marks in my book for his leadership in pioneering important scoring techniques that include the use of models of the U.S. economy. In this regard, his commitment to providing Members of Congress with the best information possible further burnished CBO reputation.

We will miss Doug Elmendorf. However, he leaves a young man, which likely means those of us in the public policy community will continue for many years to benefit from his economic wisdom and passion for this country.

#### NATIONAL COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing March as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. This month provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the significant strides we have made in confronting colorectal cancer and to renew our commitment to beating this devastating disease. In 2000, President Clinton first dedicated National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month in order to raise awareness of colorectal cancer and to remind us of the important steps we can take to prevent, detect, and ultimately defeat this disease.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. This year, approximately 50,000 Americans will die from colorectal cancer, which means each one of us in this Chamber will lose an average of 1,000 constituents in 2015 alone. The likelihood of developing colorectal cancer is now greater than 1 in 20, and 133,000 Americans are expected to be newly diagnosed this year. The American Cancer Society estimates that 2,360 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed in Maryland and, sadly, 860 Marylanders are expected to die from the disease this year.

Colorectal cancer affects men and women equally when we reach the age

of 50 and beyond. Unfortunately, as I look around this room I know that some of you have known someone who has been impacted by this disease.

Despite these grim statistics, however, the single most encouraging fact about this deadly disease is that colorectal cancer is among the most preventable of all cancers. Unlike other cancer screenings where the goal is to detect cancer at an early stage, colorectal cancer screenings can actually prevent cancer from occurring in the first place. Colorectal cancer arises from pre-cancerous growths, or polyps, that grow in the colon. If found early through appropriate screening and detection, these polyps can be removed, halting their progression into colorectal cancer. The way to beat this disease is with regular screening through a variety of methods, including colonoscopy. These are life-saving tests. In fact, a recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* concluded that of the nearly 50,000 people expected to die of colorectal cancer this year, screening could save more than half of them.

At the same time, colorectal cancer screening is becoming a public health success story in the United States. While it remains the second leading cause of cancer deaths among men and women combined, both the incidence and death rate have been declining in recent years—something no other country can claim. The percentage of the population that is up to date with recommended colorectal cancer screening increased to 65 percent in 2010 and, among those aged 50 and older, incidence rates have dropped 30 percent over the last decade. This positive trend in lower incidence rates demonstrates the importance of screening and the power of preventive medicine.

In Maryland, we can boast one of the highest screening rates among eligible populations in the country at 70 percent. However, that still means that three out of every ten people at risk are not getting screened. This highlights the need for policies to help achieve the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's national goal of having 80 percent of eligible Americans screened by 2018. Furthermore, screening rates remain unacceptably low across the country, especially in the Medicare age population, who have the greatest risk for developing colorectal cancer.

I am proud to rise in support of National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. The need for increased awareness about this disease and the importance of screening is a public health issue truly worthy of our attention in Congress. I ask my colleagues to join me in working to raise awareness that colorectal cancer is preventable, detectable, treatable and curable.

# RECORD EXPUNGEMENT DESIGNED TO ENHANCE EMPLOYMENT (REDEEM) ACT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, earlier this month, Senator RAND PAUL and I introduced the Record Expungement Designed to Enhance Employment—or REDEEM—Act, a bill that takes important new steps to ensure that youth and adults caught up in the criminal justice system have an opportunity at a second chance to turn their lives around rather than returning to a life of crime. I thank Senator PAUL for joining with me to craft this legislation.

This important bipartisan legislation would establish much needed, sensible, pragmatic reforms that keep kids out of an adult system in the first place, protect their privacy so a youthful mistake does not haunt young people throughout their lives, and make it less likely that low-level nonviolent offenders reoffend.

As the former mayor of Newark, I believe strongly in holding people accountable for breaking our laws, but I also believe it is important that we do everything possible to ensure that when people leave prison and return to their communities, they have every chance at becoming productive members of our society. No one deserves more of an opportunity to leave their past behind than our children. Far too often, kids are easily manipulated into making a youthful mistake that should not follow them for the rest of their lives. That is why I advocate that we fix our Nation's broken criminal justice system, a system that has taken an unimaginable and I believe unsustainable toll on families and communities.

The United States is home to between 4 and 5 percent of the entire globe's population, but we have 25 percent of the world's prison population. This phenomenon is unacceptable, that the land of the free would have 25 percent of the globe's imprisoned people. What is startling about that is the majority of those people are nonviolent offenders. In fact, the majority are nonviolent drug offenders.

This phenomenon has largely emerged since around 1980, a period during which the Federal prison population has grown nearly tenfold. Since 1980 we have seen a 10-time increase in our prison population. The sad reality is that nearly three-quarters of Federal prisoners are nonviolent and have no history of violence whatsoever.

What is worse and what is anguishing is that once they are convicted of a crime, American citizens then face daunting obstacles to successfully rejoin society, to being able to raise their family, put food on the table, provide for themselves. As a result of that, our State and Federal prison exits have now become revolving doors, with two of every three ex-offenders getting rearrested within 5 years. Two-thirds of those nonviolent folks leaving our prisons come back within 5 years.

When ex-offenders return to prison again and again, they are not just paying a price; we all pay the price. We are contributing so much of our resources to rearresting the same people over and over, to reincarcerating the same people over and over. A recent Pew report concluded that if just 10 States cut their recidivism just 10 percent, taxpayers would save \$470 million—money this Nation could use to either return to taxpayers or invest in our crumbling infrastructure.

To further public safety, reduce recidivism, and protect the future of our children, I am proud to reintroduce the REDEEM Act. This bill would incentivize States to raise the age of original jurisdiction for criminal courts to 18 years old. Trying juveniles who have committed low-level, non-violent crimes as adults is counterproductive. They do not emerge from prison reformed and ready to reintegrate into a high school. The criminal record they have will not help them as they try to get a job. We need a system that treats juveniles toughly and fairly, with an eye toward a productive adulthood.

This change in law is important for protecting our children's futures. For kids in the dozen States that treat 17- and even 16-year-olds as adults, no longer would getting into a schoolyard scuffle result in an adult record that could follow an individual for the rest of their life, restrict access to a college degree, limit employment prospects, and increase the likelihood of engaging in further criminal activity.

The bill would enhance Federal juvenile record confidentiality and provide for automatic expungement of records for kids who commit nonviolent crimes before they turn 15 and automatic sealing of records for those who commit nonviolent crimes after they turn 15.

The bill would ban the very cruel and counterproductive practice of juvenile solitary confinement that can have immediate and long-term detrimental effects on youth detainee mental and physical health. In fact, the majority of suicides by juveniles in prisons occur when young people are placed in solitary confinement. Other nations even consider it torture.

The bill would, for adults, offer the first broad-based Federal path to the sealing of criminal records. A person who commits a nonviolent crime will be able to petition a court and make his or her case.

The bill would enhance the accuracy of criminal justice records. Employers requesting a background check from the Federal Bureau of Investigation will be provided with only relevant and accurate information thanks to a provision that will protect job applicants by improving the quality of the Bureau's background check. Think about this: 17 million background checks were done by the FBI in 2013, many of them for private providers, and upward of half of them were inaccurate or incomplete, often causing people to lose

a job, miss an economic opportunity, and be trapped with few economic options other than to reoffend in order to feed a child.

Finally, the bill would lift a ban on receiving Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits. The intent of this program is to keep low-income families from going hungry. Yet those convicted of drug use or possession lose the right to obtain such benefits. Once an individual has paid his or her debt to society, a path to the reinstatement of those benefits should be available. As President George W. Bush said in his 2004 State of the Union Address, "America is the land of the second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life." This bill would do just that.

Taken together, these measures will help keep kids who get in trouble out of a lifetime of crime and help adults who commit nonviolent crimes become more self-reliant and less likely to reoffend. This bill is supported by 27 organizations, including: the ACLU, the National Employment Law Center, the Sentencing Project, the Center for Children Law and Policy, the Legal Action Center, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice, the General Board of Church and Society, National Juvenile Justice Network, and the National Catholic Social Justice Lobby.

The time to act is now. We cannot afford to let our criminal justice system continue to grow at the rate that it is. We cannot afford to sap billions of taxpayer dollars from a broken system that is locking people up and then doing nothing to empower them to succeed. We cannot afford to waste human potential and human productivity.

We have seen how other individual States—like Georgia, Texas, and North Carolina—are taking significant steps to address this issue and are lowering both recidivism and the size of their prison population, while at the same time lowering actual crime in their States. It is time that the Federal Government act to do the same.

I urge my fellow Senators to support the REDEEM Act so we can make our communities safer and stronger and empowers our citizens to live productive and strong lives of contribution.

## WORLD WAR II VETERANS VISIT

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the distinguished veterans of Honor Flight Northern Colorado who recently made their 13th trip to Washington, DC to visit the memorials that stand in our Nation's Capital. This group includes veterans from multiple wars and different generations, linked together by their service to our Nation.

Founded in 2005, the Honor Flight Program was originally formed to honor veterans of World War II but has since expanded to include those who have served in all other American engagements. This program provides an